

# The Kentucky Standard

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## New system to grade schools under tougher standards

### Officials say grading scale might cause 'sticker shock'

By Jennifer Corbett

Saturday, October 6, 2012 at 3:59 pm

A new testing system in the state of Kentucky is raising the bar for students and schools alike, as tougher standards have been set in place to increase all areas of potential.

To some local school officials, the changes can do nothing but good.

"This is a better, more fair accountability system for schools," said Anthony Orr, superintendent of Nelson County Board of Education.

Brent Holsclaw, superintendent of the Bardstown Independent Board of Education, said the new system fits in well with the district's goal to be college and career ready.

"Before, we basically had how much a student learned to how well the school taught," he said. "Now, we have a stick to measure it by, where as in the past we didn't have that."

The new accountability system, named Kentucky Performance Rating for Education Progress (KPREP), replaced the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT) that was under the CATS system.

Some parents may feel some "sticker shock" when they see the test scores, Orr warned. The grading scale has changed from 0-140 to 0-100.

But that doesn't mean the quality of work is any less than before, said board member Damon Jackey during a Nelson County Board of Education work session Thursday. It just means they're being held to higher standards, which will, in turn, make students more college and career ready.

With the passage by the state legislature of Senate Bill 1, which raised the expectations for students, schools are required to focus on college and career readiness, while also challenging students across the spectrum.

"(The state is) raising the bar because they feel students aren't as prepared for college as they should be," said Cara Blackmon, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment for the Bardstown Independent Board of Education during Bardstown's board meeting Sept. 25.

Under KPREP, students across the spectrum will be taken into account. Schools will be graded on five components: achievement, growth over a school year, gap population (students who typically under-perform), college/career readiness and graduation rate, while CATS focused solely on student achievement.

"The test is drilling down to the individual student," added Stephanie Koontz, director of secondary schools for the Nelson County Board of Education. "KPREP aims to know what the student knows from the beginning to the end of the school year."

According to Tim Beck, director of elementary schools for the Nelson County Board of Education, CATS was concerned with proficiency only. But with KPREP, the goal is to continually move the student to a higher standard of learning if they're already proficient.

"In KPREP, if a student comes to you as proficient you need to continue to move them forward," he said.

The intent of KPREP is to set a higher standard of learning for students, but with the new system comes a new grading scale.

Instead of being graded on a 0-140 scale, schools will be graded on a score of 0-100.

"The standards for the next test are more rigorous so we will expect this first year's results to be lower than what we are used to," Blackmon said.

For example, if a school scored a 102 on the CATS test, their KPREP score may drop to an 82.

"Instead of our score reported and looking like scores from a basketball game, it will now look like a score from a football game," Orr added.

Both local school districts have yet to receive their KPREP results from the 2011-2012 school year, but say this will be a benchmark

year on what to expect for years to come.

Each of the five KPREP components will count for a specific percentage of a school's score. How much it will count depends on if the test is being taken in elementary, middle or high school.

In elementary school, achievement will count for 30 percent, gap will count for 30 percent and growth will count for 40 percent.

Middle school will be graded on four factors — readiness of college/career at 16 percent, growth at 28 percent, gap at 28 percent and achievement at 28 percent.

High schools will be graded 20 percent on achievement, 20 percent on gap, 20 percent on growth, 20 percent on readiness for college/career and 20 percent on graduation rate — that was changed by the Average Freshmen Graduation Rate to the COHORT Formula that looks at the size of a class after four years including students who transferred in.

The factors will be weighted and added together for an overall score. Then the schools are placed in a percentile rank to determine if it's "distinguished," (scoring in the 90th percentile or higher) "proficient" (scoring in the 70-89th percentile) or "needs improvement" (scoring below the 70th percentile).

KPREP requires a higher level of thinking, Orr said.

For example, a question in CATS could ask what color the student's shirt is. In KPREP, it would ask why the shirt is that color and what was the process to get it to that color.

"Instead of going from apples to oranges, we're going from apples to coconuts," noted board member Adam Wheatley, during a Nelson County Board of Education work session Thursday.

KPREP will not take the place of the ACT for juniors, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), the EXPLORE assessment for eighth graders, the PLAN assessment for sophomores, final exams for high school students, advanced placement exams for high school students or National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for fourth and eighth graders.

*JENNIFER CORBETT can be contacted at [jcorbett@kystandard.com](mailto:jcorbett@kystandard.com)*

# Farewell, easy A

Published: October 7, 2012 12:00AM  
State Journal

Parents who attended last week's county school forums about the new state performance testing system seemed to have steeled themselves for the probability that the initial scores, due out soon, won't elevate local students' self-esteem. The scoring is different from that used in the old CATS exams and educators are warning everyone to brace for a shock.

Previous tests were graded on a 0-140 scale and local schools have been accustomed to landing in the 80-100 range. County Superintendent Chrissy Jones warned that's likely to drop to the mid 50s. The best we can recall from the olden days when 100 represented a perfect test score, 50 was a failing grade. Educators expect tougher testing will lower the percentage of kids rated proficient on reading and math.

The few parents who showed up for the meetings at Elkhorn Middle School and Western Hills High School welcomed more demanding standards, which they hope will motivate Franklin County's most academically talented learners as well as those who struggle. But remember that people who come out for such meetings probably represent a minority of parents, those who take more than passing interest in academic matters. Others may fall into apoplexy when little Johnny, who's always been at the top of his class, comes home with a test score showing he isn't such a smart boy after all. It's better they get the news now, while there's time to improve, rather than later when he graduates from high school and discovers he's not up to the rigors of college studies or the high-tech workplace.

A testing system that pulls no punches in revealing the truth about the educational inadequacies of the community and commonwealth as a whole probably won't win popularity among those who'd rather get good news. (Who wouldn't?) It means both students and teachers have to work harder.

The call for higher standards often runs into resistance. That happened last year in the Frankfort Independent system when the Frankfort Middle/High School council asked the school board to back off a pre-advanced placement program intended to close college-preparation gaps. Some teachers worried it would cramp their style and students who couldn't keep up would be demoralized.

The federal No Child Left Behind program emphasizes reaching out to groups of students who traditionally have under-achieved even with relatively weak standards of academic attainment. Although Kentucky was one of 32 states granted waivers from the program requirements this year, it's not relieved from responsibility to improve the performance of minority, low-income, special-education and non-English-speaking learners under the new testing system. They still must not be "left behind."

Just the same, parents told The State Journal's Katheran Wasson after last week's meetings that they're glad to see more ambitious goals for high achievers, too often under-challenged in public education. The ideal is for students at all levels to see their shortcomings and strive to do better. All must come to grips with the sober realization that a long haul lies ahead.

# Lincoln schools could see lower accountability scores under new system

By Ben Kleppinger  
(Stanford) The Interior Journal  
October 10, 2012  
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STANFORD — Lincoln County school officials aren't exactly sure what they're going to find when they unwrap the district's new accountability and testing scores later this month, but they're prepared for an across-the-board drop in proficiency.

The anticipated drop wouldn't be due to students performing worse than before; it would be due to new state standards that expect more from "proficient" students, Superintendent Karen Hatter said.

"The bar has been raised on where that proficiency is, particularly in reading and math," Hatter said.

Statewide math and reading scores under the new Kentucky Rating for Education Progress system — known as K-PREP — are projected by the state Department of Education to be 25-30 percentage points lower than in previous years.

But that figure needs some context, because the new K-PREP scores won't be directly comparable to old scores determined under the previous CATS system, said Pam Hart, Lincoln Schools' chief deputy of quality management.

"It would be like comparing the scores of a football game and a basketball game," Hart

said. "The numbers are the same but they mean different things."

Hart said under CATS, academic achievement was the major way scores were determined. Under K-PREP, academic achievement is just a small piece of the overall score.

Under K-PREP, academic achievement only makes up 30 percent of each elementary school's total score, 28 percent of Lincoln Middle School's score and just 20 percent of Lincoln High School's score.

Schools' scores are now substantially affected by how individual students improve in proficiency over time and how well low-income, special-education, minority and English-language-learner students perform.

At the middle and high school levels, scores also account for how well students are prepared for college or a career.

"It's new, it's rather complicated, and I think it's especially complicated for those outside of education because ... as parents or community members, we're used to looking up numbers from the past and saying, 'OK, how are we doing?'" Hart said. "I'm intrigued to open these scores. We don't know if the schools that have performed really well in the past will perform as well."

Hatter said even though it's hard to guess how individual schools' scores will change, she expects to see a "move toward the mean," with previously-high-scoring schools losing more off their scores than previously-low-scoring schools.

"You won't be able to make a standard score comparison (year over year), but you will be able to see how you ranked compared to other schools," Hatter said. "It will be a good way to see if you've moved up in rank."

Lincoln County High School Principal Tim Godbey told Stanford City Council MORE

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members Oct. 4 he expects his students to be an exception to the rule of lower scores.

Even with K-PREP's higher standards, Godbey said he feels the high school's progress has been so monumental that it will be one of the few schools in the state to see its scores go up.

"That's not official by any means," Godbey said. "But we feel like by our preliminary work that that's what has happened."

Hatter said work done across the district to improve performance following the high school's classification last year as a persistently low-achieving school has helped improve students' performance.

As a result, scores may not drop as drastically as they might have otherwise, she said.

"I think we've taken some steps to mitigate the impact of those higher standards," she said.

Hatter and Hart said the scoring change is a good move that will help the Lincoln County School District improve students' outcomes.

Hatter said the new standards are in-line with national expectations, meaning students who meet the "proficient" level now will be better prepared to find work and contribute anywhere in the world.

"Students in Kentucky are not just going to compete ... with students from Kentucky," she said. "They're going to be national and international citizens now."

Hart said the new scoring system provides much more detail on individual student performance, allowing for more focus on helping students if they begin to fall behind.

"You want to be able to determine as a parent and an educator if each individual child is able to make academic progress," she said. "I think (the new system) is good. It's just so new that to be able to clearly articulate exactly how it's calculated is somewhat difficult."

The new scores will be given to the school district later this month, and then released to the public a couple weeks later. The scores will be presented in a new "school report card" that is "replete with information" breaking down school performance in many different areas, Hart said.

"We are all learning this just as fast and furious as everyone else," she said.

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# New tests will mean lower scores in Clark County, across the state

By Bob Flynn  
The Winchester Sun  
October 10, 2012

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When the first test scores from the new Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) tests are released this week, they are expected to show lower short-term proficiency rates than seen previously on the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT).

Senate Bill 1, passed by legislators in 2009, did away with the former Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), which was based on student proficiency, and replaced it with the new Unbridled Learning assessment and accountability system that focuses on college and career readiness and success after high school.

Kentucky Department of Education officials are warning people not to panic about the scores because the test scores from the new assessment and accountability system are focused on the broader idea of college and career readiness — not just proficiency.

Officials warn that because of the state's adoption of the Common Core State Standards and the new, more rigorous K-PREP assessments tied to those standards, school districts across the state can expect anywhere from a 10- to 40-point drop in the proficiency rates.

Clark County Superintendent Elaine Farris said the district has sent letters to parents notifying them of the upcoming results and explaining the new testing system.

Farris also said the results from the new tests can't be compared to previous results, since the state is assessing students on a different standard based on college and career readiness where the old system's standards were based on basic proficiency in math and reading.

"The thing we need to stress is that it is a brand new system. It's nothing like it was under CATS, so you can't compare apples to oranges," Farris said. "Students were still tested in the same five categories — math, reading, social studies, science and writing — the same as the old tests, but the standards are higher and the tests are more rigorous in the new system."

The Unbridled Learning assessment and accountability system is designed to provide in-depth information about the performance of students, schools, districts and the state as a whole.

The system has five main components:

— Achievement: how students perform on state tests. As in the past, elementary and middle school students' scores will be labeled as novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished. Kentucky's goal is 100 percent proficiency for all students. High school achievement will be based on end-of-course exams and on-demand writing.

— Gap: how students who traditionally under-perform are progressing compared  
**MORE**

to their peers. Schools will compare test results for African American, Hispanic, Native American, special education, low income and limited English proficiency students, combined into one gap group, to results for other students not in those categories.

— Growth: how all students are making progress. A statistical program will measure how students' scores are improving from one year to the next.

— College/Career Readiness: how well schools and districts are preparing students for life after high school. Schools and district must provide information about how many students are ready for college and/or careers, based on test scores and certifications earned.

— Graduation Rate: how many students are graduating on time. Schools and districts will report how many students graduate with four years of high school.

Each of the five main areas will account for a specific percentage of a school's score.

For elementary schools, achievement and gap will account for 30 percent of the score, while growth makes up the remaining 40 percent of the score. Achievement, gap and growth each account for 28 percent of the middle school's score, with college and career readiness accounting for 16 percent. Each of the five areas are worth 20 percent of the high school score.

Points from each of the areas will be weighted and added together for an

overall score from 0-100, then rank-ordered and placed into percentiles.

One point is awarded for each percent of students scoring proficient or distinguished, one-half point is awarded for each percent of students scoring apprentice, and no points are awarded for novice students.

To encourage continuous improvement, each school and district will have an annual goal to reach — annual measurable objective (AMO) — based on how much improvement is needed to reach the ultimate goal of 100. Schools and districts will also have goals to reach in each of the five categories.

Overall school scores are ranked by level and will fall into one of three main classifications based on where they are ranked. Those rankings include:

— Distinguished: the top 10 percent of districts or schools from a particular level (90th percentile)

— Proficient: in the top 30 percent of districts or schools from a particular level (70th percentile)

— Needs improvement: schools and districts falling outside of the proficient or distinguished categories and not meeting their AMO's (69th percentile or below).

Farris said she thinks the new assessment and accountability system is a big improvement over CATS.

"Superintendents have always asked for more data we could look at. We wanted to know about achievement, we wanted to know about growth, we wanted to know about closing the gap. Now all of it  
**MORE**

is there,” Farris said. “It is cutting edge and it is going to do for us what we asked. We have asked for it to be norm reference and criterion referenced and it is. So, we are getting exactly what we asked for.”

This year’s scores will be used as a baseline for future scores to be compared with, and though the test scores can’t be compared to last year’s, Farris said some of the data could still be used to calculate student progress.

“We’ll have the individual student data which we will be able to pull and see how they did on specific content, whether they mastered that content or whether there was a deficiency in that content area,” Farris said. “We will be able to make decisions on that because we will still be able to see if they were proficient in say, reading complex texts. We will also be able to look at that data and see where we rank across the state. So it is still very useful information.”

As part of the new Common Core Standards implemented last year, the district does mastery checks, Farris said. Several times a semester, students are tested on the content that has been covered in classes up to that point, to see if they have mastered that content, which they will be tested on during the end-of-course assessments in May.

“We break it down into units by the content that has been taught so we know what they know at that point in the semester. You can’t wait until the end of the year, so we assess along the way,” Farris said.

Farris said that along with the letter sent out last week, the district has printed a booklet that will be sent home with each student this week that explains the new assessment system in more detail.

Contact Bob Flynn at  
[blfyinn@winchestersun.com](mailto:blfyinn@winchestersun.com).

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Daily Independent (Ashland, KY), October 12, 2012

## Scores to be low? Results of first K-PREP tests no cause to abandon effort

EDITORIAL

ASHLAND — Officials at Tuesday's Kentucky Board of Education were told the results of the state's new tests for public school students will not be released until late October or possibly even early November. The results had been anticipated for the middle of this month.

If the predictions of Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holiday are accurate, the delay could postpone the arrival of bad news for many school districts and their students.

Holiday has been warning for months that students, parents, teachers and administrators should expect test scores to drop, perhaps even dramatically. In fact, during a tour of the state Holiday took with David Adkisson, president of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, in June, the state's top public education executive expressed concern the scores will be so low that some members of the Kentucky General Assembly, school administrators, teachers and parents will call for the new tests to be scrapped and replaced with a revised version of the old state mandated tests.

That can't be allowed to happen, Holiday warned, and he's right. Backing away from the demanding new tests would be a step backwards for quality education in Kentucky.

Kentucky was one of the first states to adopt the national corps of education standards, and the new K-PREP tests are based on new benchmarks established by those standards.

The tests are more difficult because the education expectations of students are higher. It is going to take awhile for Kentucky to adjust its classroom teaching to meet the higher standards, but it is a goal worth achieving. Too many students are graduating from high school lacking the basic skills they need for success in college and even the workplace. The only way to eliminate this negative is to raise our expectations.

If Kentucky were to lower its high standards in response to low test scores, it would be bowing to mediocrity. That's unacceptable.

We hope Holiday is wrong and the scores on the K-PREP will be much higher than he expects. But if they

are not, we must not abandon the high expectations just because too few of our young people are reaching them. Instead, we must find a way to increase the achievements of our public schoolchildren. That's the only proper response to low test scores.

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Daily Independent (Ashland, KY), October 11, 2012

## Consolidation has failed in Greenup

Letter to the Editor

ASHLAND — Many older folks in Greenup County are concerned about the quality of education our students are receiving at our high school. Some, including me, believe the consolidation of high schools in a mostly rural county could not serve the needs of many of our students. That may be because some of us older folks came from one-room grade schools and later attended one of three high schools in the county — Wurtland, Greenup and McKell.

Today, I had a long discussion about this issue with Dr. Ed Lowdenback, a former principal in Greenup County, who went on to head up school systems across Kentucky. His father, Cliff Lowdenback, was the superintendent of Greenup County schools when we were forced into consolidation.

I had many discussions in my home with Cliff and his associate, Leo Floyd, about the pros and cons of consolidation. All three of us agreed at the time it was not in the best interest of rural students, and moving the new high school as far away from the others as possible would also help destroy the educational spirit and hands-on support of the three communities where the old schools were revered.

Dr. Lowdenback, who can speak with authority about the pros and cons of consolidation of schools in rural counties, agrees with the concerns of myself and some older students or graduates of the three high schools, that Greenup County should strongly consider the construction of at least two new high schools in the county, one near South Shore and one near the combined communities of Greenup and Wurtland.

Consolidations of schools were an experiment that was forced on many counties in Kentucky. It may have worked elsewhere, but I'm convinced it's not the right fit for Greenup County.

Soc Clay, South Shore

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# New school report cards. What do they mean?

**The Middlesboro Daily News**  
**Oct. 12, 2012**  
**Special to The Daily News**

Sometime in late October, parents will be receiving new student report cards, according to Dr. Rita Cook, superintendent of Middlesboro Independent Schools.

The student report cards are based on new academic core standards that are very different than they have been before.

These new "standards" describe what students need to learn at different grade levels and the expectation is that students will learn harder content at each grade level. Based on these new standards, every school district in Kentucky can expect to see a drop in student scores, said Cook.

It may helpful to think about the transition being made by your child and their school to new standards and new tests like this: it's similar to a child who plays basketball on an eight-foot goal in middle school moving up to a 10-foot goal in high school. The child has the same athletic ability that they had in middle school, but the new standard - a 10-foot goal- is tougher and will require some adjustment. It's reasonable to expect that your child will need time to adjust to the new standards.

In the same way, the new standards our schools and students are being measured by are tougher, she said. The height of the goal has been raised.

It's reasonable to expect lower scores initially, but the decline should improve as

teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

These new standards and assessment have been mandated by Senate Bill 1. Every school district in Kentucky is required, without exception, to implement the standards and state assessment.

Based on the new state standards, only 30 percent of the school districts across the state will be labeled proficient.

For example, local parents, teachers and the public are used to seeing school scores in the range of 80 to 100 in recent years. Those scores were calculated on a scale of 0 to 140. The state now uses a 100-point scale.

Furthermore, state education officials predict that the percentage of students meeting proficiency on the reading and math tests could drop by double digits compared to 2011.

So, parents who are used to seeing proficient or distinguished scores on their child's test results could be surprised to see them drop to apprentice or novice this year.

State officials caution that the upcoming results can't be compared to previous years because the test is so different and the scoring has changed.

It would be like comparing the scores of a football game and a basketball game - the numbers are the same, but they mean different things, said Cook.

# What do new scores mean? It's complicated

12:57 AM, Oct 14, 2012 |

Cincinnati Enquirer

Written by

William Croyle

The first scores from Kentucky's new public school assessment and accountability system will be reported in the next few weeks.

The amount of data released will be overwhelming and complicated. There will be nothing from previous years to compare it to.

But there are a few nuggets parents should be able to pull out to get a picture of how their childrens' schools and districts are faring.

The new system, called "Kentucky's Unbridled Learning," stems from Senate Bill 1 in 2009. The bill ordered the biggest overhaul of the state's K-12 education system since 1990, when the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) was implemented.

In February 2010, Kentucky was the first of 45 states to adopt the Common Core Standards for reading and math. The standards provide consistent national benchmarks and are focused on all students being college and career ready. Similar standards are currently being developed in science and social studies.

The first assessments under Unbridled Learning were administered to students last spring.

The new system is so different, including the range of the point scale (it's now 0-100 instead of 0-140), that it will be impossible to compare this year's results to previous years. Scores under Unbridled Learning will likely be lower for each school than in past years given the scale and the way they are computed.

"If you look at when KERA (the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990) came out, you couldn't compare it to anything from previous years," said Jim Palm, superintendent of Southgate Independent Schools. "This system now is the same way."

The three simplest pieces of data to understand in the new system are: the school and district overall scores; their percentiles; and their classifications.

An overall score will be given to each school and district based on points earned in five components:

- » Achievement -- how students perform on state assessments.
- » Gap -- how students, who traditionally underperform compared to their peers, are progressing.
- » Growth -- how all students are progressing.
- » College and Career Readiness -- how well schools and districts are preparing students for life after high school.
- » Graduation Rate -- how many students are graduating on time.

Each of those components will count for a specific percentage of the overall score. Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness will not be factored into the elementary school scores. Graduation Rate will also not be in middle school scores.

Those overall scores will then be ranked by level -- elementary, middle and high school -- in order from best to worst and placed into percentiles.

**MORE**

A school's or district's percentile ranking will then determine its classification:

- » Distinguished -- the top 10 percent (90th percentile);
- » Proficient -- the top 30 percent (70th percentile);
- » Needs Improvement -- those not falling into the first two categories.

The layers beneath the scores, percentiles and classifications are where it gets more complicated. For example, the achievement piece is derived from several tests, including the new K-PREP state assessment, which replaced the Kentucky Core Content Tests last spring. College and Career Readiness is based on student test performances and attainment of career academic and technical benchmarks.

Schools will also be labeled in other ways, such as "Schools of Distinction," "High-Performing Schools," "High-Progress Schools," "Priority Schools," and "Focus Schools."

"There is so much information that it's difficult to say a whole lot without confusing people," said Kelly Middleton, superintendent of Newport Independent Schools. "To me, this is a baseline year with new standards, and we'll move forward from this point."

The state's goal is 100 percent proficiency for all students. Schools will be given targets in the five components to use as a guide to help them improve.

Lisa Gross, spokeswoman for the Kentucky Department of Education, said all of the data will be easier to understand once a few years have been recorded, and schools and districts can make comparisons.

"The ultimate goal of public education in Kentucky is to get kids ready for college and a career," Gross said. "To do that, we need data that can show continuous improvement."

To read more about details of Unbridled Learning, visit [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Click on "Administrative Resources," "Commissioner of Education" and "Unbridled Learning."

## HOPKINS COUNTY SCHOOLS

# State test scores likely to be lower

Standards are more  
challenging, rigorous

BY ERIN SCHMITT  
MESSENGER STAFF WRITER

eschmitt@the-messenger.com

School officials are asking parents to brace themselves for lower scores when state test results are released to the public in a few weeks.

The Kentucky Performance Rating for Education Progress (K-PREP) assessment began during the 2011-12 school year, replacing the long-standing Commonwealth Accountability and Testing System model.

"It's important for our parents to know with the impending release of the K-PREP results from last year, the state has charged the school districts to get the message out that we are anticipating significantly lower

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

scores, particularly in reading and math," said Jason Clark, the director of secondary education and assessment for Hopkins County Schools.

Testing standards have changed greatly with the new accountability system, "Unbridled Learning: College and Career Readiness For All."

## What's New

- While the CATS test was scored on a scale of 0 to 140, the K-PREP is scored on a scale of 0 to 100.

- Instead of focusing on proficiency in reading and math, the new model measures career and college readiness.

- Schools scores 90th percentile or above are "distinguished," between 70th and 89th percentile are "proficient," 69th percentile or below are "needs improvement."

Instead of focusing on proficiency in reading and math, Clark said, the new model measures career and college readiness, even for elementary-aged students. To ensure students are college and career ready, the standards have become more challenging and rigorous.

Commissioner Terry Holliday is projecting anywhere from a 40 percent to 50 percent drop in proficiency rates across the state, Clark said. The sharp decrease is anticipated for schools and individual students.

For example, a sixth-grade student who has shown proficiency in third and fourth grades, could be marked apprentice level or lower on their fifth-grade exams.

"It's not because the student has stopped learning," he said. "It's what the student is being assessed on has com-

pletely changed."

While the CATS test was scored on a scale of 0 to 140, the K-PREP is scored on a scale of 0 to 100.

Hopkins County parents have come accustomed to seeing scores in the mid 80s to 90s for elementaries and some

where in the 70s for the middle and high schools, Clark said.

The scores will drop, but whether it's good or bad won't be determined immediately, he said.

The district is anticipating a bigger drop in test scores at the elementary level than at the high schools, Clark said.

"When the standards changed, there was a gap," he said.

What was once taught at a sixth-grade level, is now basically instruction for fourth-graders.

So there is a gap in what third-grade students learned the previous year to what's taught in fourth grade, Clark said.

There was a blueprint teachers could follow to base their instruction on for the CATS test, Clark said. No such blueprint exists for the K-PREP yet.

"I just don't want (parents) to think that the teachers stopped teaching all of a sudden," Clark said. "When, you know, they were prepared for a baseball game and they find out it's a football game after the fact."

The district will have to see what the results are and adjust how the teachers instruct based on the data released, he said.

The K-PREP results were originally slated for public release earlier this month. However, the vendors didn't return them to

the state on time, so the public announcement was delayed, Clark said.

According to the Kentucky School Boards Association, the state expects to publicly release K-PREP test scores the week of Oct. 29.

For the first time, the state intends to rank each school based on its actual scores, Clark said.

Schools scoring in the 90th percentile or above are considered distinguished, scoring between the 70th and 89th percentile are proficient, while those in the 69th percentile or below are labeled as needs improvement.

Once ranked, every school will be given an individual goal to try to achieve within the next year, he said. As long as the school is showing gains toward the goal, it's considered progress.

**State assessment scorekeeping explained, consulting contract approved**

By Crystal Wylie

Register News Writer

RICHMOND — Results for the state's new assessment and accountability system, Unbridled Learning, came in Thursday morning, but the numbers are embargoed until Oct. 29, Randy Pepper, Madison County Schools chief academic officer, told the board Thursday night.

"Today is the day that most of the schools have been waiting on since last Spring," he said.

Although he was not permitted to share the scores with the board or media, Pepper said he wanted to forewarn the members of drastic changes in the scoring system. (A more thorough examination of the new system will be featured in an upcoming Register).

"Scores that used to be in the 100s, are now going to be in the 50s and 60s — not because of any decrease in achievement, it's just a different way they've kept score," he said.

Pepper has used this explanation: "Currently in football, you get seven points for a touchdown and three points for a field goal. [But with the new scoring in the accountability system], a touchdown would be worth three points and a field goal worth one point. The scores are going to look completely different when you see them in the newspapers, but that doesn't mean the flow of the game changed, just the scorekeeping mechanism."

The scores of elementary, middle and high schools are all figured differently, he said.

For elementary schools, 30 percent of their score is based on "achievement," or how well students perform on the K-PREP tests (Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress) that are administered during the last 14 instructional days of the school year.

The schools are given zero points for a "novice" score, a half a point for an "apprentice" score and a full point for a "proficient" or "distinguished" score.

However, in the past, a school's score was determined only by the results of these tests, Pepper said.

The new system adds two components — "gap" and "growth," which account for 30 percent and 40 percent of the total elementary school score, respectively.

The "gap" component is measured by how many students achieve "proficient" or "distinguished" and are either a minority, receive free or reduced lunch, receive special education or are English Language Learners (students who have not mastered the English language because they are new to the country), he said.

"The last part of the elementary score is growth, and that's the part that really excites me the most," he said. "That's measuring how well we as a school are helping kids grow academically, based upon where they started and where they need to go."

Middle schools also will be scored on these three components (each worth 28 percent of the score), but 16 percent of the score is based on "college and career readiness," Pepper said.

When eighth-graders take the EXPLORE test — part of an ACT series of tests called EPAS (Educational Planning and Assessment System) — their "college and career readiness" score will be based on the percentage of students who meet the benchmarks in reading, mathematics and English.

High school students are deemed "college ready" if they meet the ACT benchmarks. But, students are deemed "career ready" by passing the ASVAB (military assessment test), attaining an industry-recognized certificate in a vocational field, or by taking the ACT WorkKeys, a job skills assessment system that measures foundational and soft skills, according to the ACT website.

Later in the meeting, board chair Mona Isaacs asked about the different career-ready certificates available to students, such as the already established nursing certificate.

A board work session has been scheduled to discuss career-ready options for students, including a possible real estate certification.

"Seniors may start working on a real estate license so when they graduate high school, they are prepared to take the licensing test," said Pepper, who will find out in the next couple months if the district was awarded a grant to fund the program.

A "graduation rate" component is added for high schools' assessments so all five sections will each account for 20 percent of a school's total score.

The Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate is determined by the percent of students that entered as freshman that graduated in four years.

There are changes in the state's standards of proficiency as well.

"In the past, there was a high percentage of students reaching proficiency on the state assessment, but when they took the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT (nationwide tests), the percentage of kids reaching proficiency was nowhere close to the number of kids who were meeting the benchmark," Pepper said. "There was an over-inflation of students meeting proficiency."

The new Kentucky standards adopted last year has risen the bar for students to meet proficiency, he said, therefore the number of students meeting proficiency will drop.

"We want to make sure there is a continuum between proficiency on the state assessment and meeting the benchmarks on the ACT package," he said.

Also in the past, schools could score between zero and 140. Now, schools may score between zero and 100.

After a final score is tallied for each school, they will be ranked from highest to lowest score, so each will fall into a percentile.

Schools in the 90th percentile and above are labeled "distinguished," 70th to 89th percentile are "proficient," and anything below 70th "needs improvement."

"This is something that the public really needs to know about ... We could be doing 69 percent better than all the other schools in the state, but still need improvement (based on the outcome of the year)," said board member Chris Hager. "You can have every school in the state do 400 percent better than last year and still have 70 percent of them 'need improvement.'" continued

continued

"This district has put a lot of effort into formative assessments throughout the year ... we measure kids continuously in lots and lots of ways," said Superintendent Tommy Floyd. "It doesn't matter where we get them when they come in the first day of school, but what did we do with them while they were here? ... I know that's something that's been a long-standing point on this board. Now the assessment system will examine it."

Peffer and Donna Caldwell, the district assessment coordinator, have prepared several video clips that will be posted once the score embargo is lifted. The videos will be located on the district's website ([www.madison.k12.ky.us](http://www.madison.k12.ky.us)) and broadcast on Channel 9 for parents to get a better understanding of the assessments.

#### USF/E-Rate consulting services contract

After a lengthy discussion, the board voted 5-0 to approve a consulting services contract.

The Universal Services Fund (USF) is a program of the federal government that gives the district significant discounts or funding assistance for technology-related purchases, such as wiring and telecommunications, said Marvin Welch, chief operations officer.

For several years, the district has received technical assistance through KEDC (Kentucky Education Development Corporation) and Steve Smith, a consultant who helps recoup some of the district's technology expenses through the federal program, Welch said. KEDC is going through some changes and will not be offering the same assistance it had in the past, he said, so he recommended continuing consulting services with Smith, who had since moved on to Lite the Nite Technologies. Smith's services would cost the same daily rate as before.

Members of the board hesitated to make a motion on the recommendation.

"I think we probably need an explanation in detail as to what exactly — I know they are getting us funding back for the money we are spending on telecommunications," Hager said. "This is a very specialized program that it takes quite a bit of knowledge to understand the ins and outs of the Act that was passed by Congress to give us this money."

There are a lot of regulations and details when dealing with a federal program, Welch explained, and "the more a person is an expert (about the program), the more they're going to know what you truly qualify for."

Since 2008, the district has paid \$73,000 for Smith's consulting, he said. But, over that same period, the district was able to recover \$3.7 million from USF with his help.

"That's less than two percent," Welch continued. "To me, that seems like a very worthwhile payback on those extra services. We're getting a lot better discounts than if we weren't using the services of Mr. Smith."

Board member John Lackey was still unconvinced.

"I saw that in your material, but 'Lite the Nite' sounds very quirky and flaky, frankly. I don't know who they are," Lackey said. "Maybe we can do it ourselves and save \$73,000 — that's what I want to know."

Lite the Nite Technologies is an approved company on Kentucky Education Development Corporation's bid list, Welch replied, and is the company Smith works for, "but we're contracting directly through him."

Floyd agreed using Smith would be the best way for the district to get a return on its money, especially for a school system "that's bandwidth capabilities are bigger than that of the state that supplies it," he said. "Our cabling is miles and miles of very capable bandwidth ... USF has helped us with almost every bit of it."

To maximize the district's return, the board should hire "the same person, with the same ongoing relationship and the same knowledge of what we're doing," the superintendent said.

The board's conversation brought up questions about the state providing these consulting services as opposed to a third-party consultant such as Smith.

"With a state that's got 120 counties ... with as much money we stand to gain back, you would think that we would have some portion of our state government that would be helping gain these funds back without having to go out to third parties," Hager said.

"That's what concerned me," Lackey said. "That 176 districts in the state — we're one of the larger ones — if they're hitting everyone of those for \$50,000, that's a heck of a lot of money KDE (Kentucky Department of Education) can save us."

Lackey asked Floyd if he could approach the KDE about the issue.

Technology director Charlene McGee interjected.

"Maybe I can shed some more light on this," she said.

The state has just one USF liaison for the entire state, she explained, so it was "not likely" individual districts would get help.

"We just got \$2.7 million that funded infrastructure in nine of our schools. We cannot do the initiatives in this district if we did not have the help of this program," McGee said.

The money also takes care of server maintenance and provides several services, she continued. "It's not just handing us money to buy more, it's helping us to support the district."

Board member Becky Coyle pointed out that the contract's duration is one year, "so if something were to come available," the district could entertain other options.

"It's what we have to work with now," Hager said. "But, if the state realizes that we're spending \$73,000 over a five-year period, it would be a logical thing to have somebody hired in-house to take care of those things. And the people of Madison County would know that we're taking care of the nickels and dimes and they'll trust us with their dollars."

**Hogg: Berea test scores are down**

By Ronica Shannon  
Senior News Writer  
BEREA — Berea Community School Superintendent Mike Hogg warned the community during Tuesday's council meeting about test scores that will be made public later this month.

"I'll tell you right now, test scores are down," he said. "In basketball, when you shoot outside the arch, it's worth three points. When you shoot inside the arch, it's worth two points and a free throw is one point. Now, the game has changed. Free throws are worth half a point, shots inside the arch are worth one point and shots outside the arch are worth two points. So, what's just happened to the total score of the basketball game? It's went down."

The primary reason behind this legislative change, known

as "Unbridled Learning," is that American children continue to be scholastically outranked on an international level, he said.

"International standards are higher than national standards," Hogg said. "Our state legislature felt it was needed to raise those standards."

The scores for Berea Community Schools and Madison County Schools will be publicly released Oct. 29, Hogg said.

In other business:

- The council adopted a revised version of the city's Comprehensive Plan Tuesday, which is an outline of future growth required by state statute to be updated every five years.

Berea's adopted plan includes several sections including environment, land

use and development, transportation, housing, economic development, historic preservation, community facilities and services.

The last revision was done in 2008. Revised goals include: Support environmental protection and preservation for the physical, social and economic well-being of the population; achieve land use patterns that contribute to reduced energy use, local food production, healthy citizens and community resilience; develop and maintain an accessible, safe and efficient diversified transportation system; provide safe, sanitary, affordable and livable housing options for all Berea residents; support the attraction and expansion of diverse business and industry providing a wide range of

goods and services as well as stable employment opportunities; recognize and preserve the historic and cultural resources of the city and county; and ensure that adequate, affordable and accessible community facilities and services are provided in an efficient manner.

- The council heard the final reading of an ordinance changing the zoning classification of property owned at 620 White Station Road from agriculture to major commercial use.

The next meeting of the Berea City Council is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 6 at the Berea Police and Municipal Building on Chestnut Street.

**Students cleared for landing in the Hawk's Nest**

Shannon Johnson Elementary wins money to promote physical activity during and after school  
By Crystal Wylie  
Register News Writer

BEREA — If you want to play in the Hawk's Nest at Shannon Johnson Elementary School, you have to be quick on your feet. In the Hawk's Nest, commonly known as a "Gaga Pit," around 15 fifth-graders were trying to avoid getting hit by a bouncy ball while inside of an enclosed wooden ring. At the same time, they were exercising throughout their entire 25-minute recess, said Hannah Edmondson, Fit Lab instructor at Shannon Johnson.

Groups of students rotate each game and can usually squeeze in five to six rounds during that 25-minute period, she said.

The rules are simple: Don't let the ball hit below your knees, don't knock the ball out of the Nest, only use your hands and don't touch the ball twice in a row. An elected referee makes the tough calls to decide who stays and who goes.

Eventually the numbers dwindle down to only two students in the Nest. They dodge, twist, run, dive and lurch to avoid the bouncy ball until there is only one student — the winner — is left standing.

The Hawk's Nest was one of the projects funded by a \$2,500 "Praiseworthy Pioneer" award from ChildObesity180, an organization committed to childhood obesity prevention.

The Active Schools Acceleration Project (ASAP), a ChildObesity-180 initiative, launched the competition in February in commitment with the Partnership for a Healthier America, according to a release from Madison County Schools.

The competition awarded schools with the "most creative, impactful, and scalable school-based programs and technologies to promote children's physical activity," the release stated.

First Lady Michelle Obama encouraged participants in the competition with a call for applications via a video message.

Shannon Johnson used the money to improve outside activities for students to use during recess to provide more structured activities, such as the Hawk's Nest. The school also plans to provide activities that families can utilize after school hours.

The school purchased a game called Nine-Square-In-The-Air that is played in the gymnasium.

Nine-Square is a variation of the common playground game called Four-Square, a fast-paced game similar to volleyball, but with nine players situated in a grid.

Every elementary student will learn to play the game as soon as they get to second grade, Edmondson told a group of kindergarteners who got to watch their older classmates play the game Monday.

Shannon Johnson also plans to start a tennis program that will include an after-school tennis team, as well as the sport added to the school's curriculum. The funds will be used to purchase racquets, balls and a ball machine.



# K-Prep scores raise the bar

## PAST TEST SCORES WERE CALCULATED DIFFERENTLY

MARLA TONCRAY

marla.toncray@lee.net

School districts around Kentucky are bracing for the soon-to-be-released K-Prep test scores, which will reflect how schools are performing under new state accountability standards.

K-Prep, Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress, is the result of Senate Bill 1 passed during the 2011 Kentucky General Assembly session.

The new accountability system, which reviews tests scores

upon which they are based, a higher benchmark for determining proficiency, and a different scoring scale. Ishmael explained, in the past, the scoring scale was based on 140 possible points and the new scale is based on 100 points. The proficiency benchmarks, he said, were determined based on the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's benchmarks for college readiness.

"The students are still getting the best education as before, the difference is how they are being judged," Ishmael said.

The scoring system is complicated, encompassing categories of achievement, gap, growth, college/career readiness, and graduation rate. These five categories are then scored for an overall score, which results in a percentile rank, which then equates to the overall category rankings of distinguished, proficient and needs improvement. The distinguished, proficient and needs improvement rankings are then applied to both the student and district score.

Schools or districts with a percentile of 70 or higher

will be classified as proficient; schools and districts falling below the 70 percentile mark will be classified as needs improvement.

Elementary students are tested in three categories (achievement, gap, growth); middle school students four categories (achievement, gap, growth, and college/career readiness) and high school students in all five categories.

In addition to achievement scores, there is a calculation of how much each student has grown compared to a peer group; and the gap calculation, which is determined by the percent of proficient students in the free/reduced lunch, students with disabilities, English language learners,

and minority categories.

Ishmael said these scores in the past were calculated in a different way than the new K-Prep standards.

At the middle and high school levels, the number of students meeting the requirement for college and/or career readiness will be part of the accountability score and is the main focus of the new system.

The final component on which the score will be dependent is the graduation rate. High schools and districts are required to improve graduation rates each year to a level of 98 percent by 2022.

Ishmael said the scores will trigger how school districts write their annual improvement plans and

there is no funding tied to the test results.

The Kentucky Department of Education estimates the percent of students who will score proficient or distinguished in reading will decrease by 25 percent to 36 percent, depending on the school level and math percentages are estimated to decrease by 10 percent to 37 percent.

Ishmael said he wanted to alert the public of the changes before test results are released, which is expected to be the week of Oct. 29.

"Parents, students and the public should be prepared for these changes that will occur statewide and affect all students and schools," Ishmael said.

See K-PREPS, A2

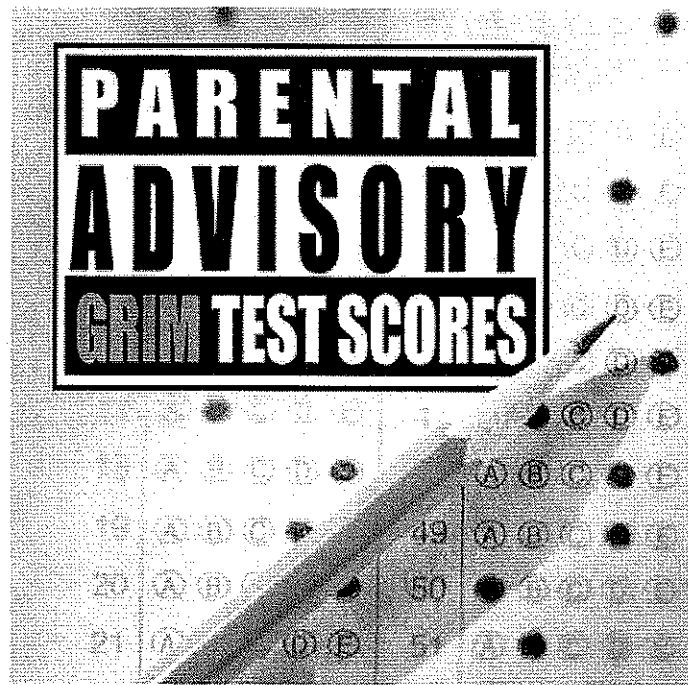
## K-PREPS

FROM A1

from the 2011-2012 school year, replaces former testing programs such as the Kentucky Core Content Testing. K-Prep is also the state's approved accountability program, which enabled Kentucky to get a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind accountability system.

Students are tested in areas of math, science, reading, social studies and writing. In 2013, arts and humanities, practical living and vocational studies will be added to the tests. In 2014, teacher and principal effectiveness will be added to the scoring.

According to Ron Ishmael, assessment coordinator with the Mason County School District, the scores are not comparable either by school or individual student to past years because of how the scores are calculated, the new standards



# Kentucky school officials brace for fallout from revisions that stress higher standards

By Antoinette Konz  
[akonz@courier-journal.com](mailto:akonz@courier-journal.com)  
The Courier-Journal  
10/21/12

Parents be warned: Your child's results from Kentucky's rigorous new statewide tests will be released within the next few weeks — and somewhat by design, the outcome is expected to be grim.

Reading and math test scores will be "lower than what parents are used to" — the result of higher standards and longer, more difficult tests, says Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday.

"Your child may have been distinguished in the past, but will now be proficient; your child may have been proficient before but will now be apprentice or novice," Holliday said. "Do expect a drop, but don't panic. It's all about helping our kids be ready for the global marketplace, where they are going to have to compete."

Local schools and superintendents are also doing their part to prepare their communities for the new test results and spread the word that while the

scores expected to be released in early November will drop, it doesn't necessarily mean kids are doing worse.

"We expect that with the higher standards, a lot of our students will not be proficient," said Jefferson County Public School Superintendent Donna Hargens. "Any time you raise the bar, the initial results are going to be lower than they were before. We are prepared for these results and are ready to use this new data to provide more support for our students and help them succeed."

Jefferson district officials have dedicated an entire website — [www.raisethebarlouisville.org](http://www.raisethebarlouisville.org) — to explain the new standards and testing system. They've aired several public service announcements, sent home multiple letters to parents covering the changes — and even enlisted Mayor Greg Fischer, other officials and business leaders, to help spread the word.

"I want to make sure people understand the context ... and if people are disappointed in the scores, what they need to do then is work hard to fill the gap and ask themselves how they can help their child or how they can help their local school," Fischer said.

"This isn't a time to blame or point fingers," he added, "it's a time for people to be realistic about how far we have to go to be the best in the world."

Officials are also cautioning parents from comparing this year's results to last year's results.

"These are two very different tests," Holliday said. "What we have done is establish a new baseline."

Last year's scores showed that 73 percent of Kentucky's elementary students were proficient in math, and

**MORE**

76 percent were proficient in reading. At the middle-school level, 65 percent were proficient in math; 70 percent in reading. And in high schools, 46 percent were proficient in math; 66 percent in reading.

By comparison, those 2011 scores show 65 percent of JCPS elementary students were proficient in reading and 63 percent in math; 60 percent of middle-schoolers were proficient in reading and 52 percent in math; and 66 percent of high-schoolers were proficient in reading and 46 percent in math.

In the past three years, 18 JCPS schools have been targeted for state-mandated overhauls because their test scores are persistently among the worst in Kentucky.

The new scores will stem from tests in reading, math, science, social studies and writing that roughly 500,000 students statewide in grades 3-12 took in May. Holliday said science, social studies and writing results should be in line with previous years because the content has not changed in those subjects.

Principals and teachers say they are anxious to see how their students fared, even if the scores are lower than in the past. Western High School principal David Mike said he and his staff want to "know the end result so we can see what we need to do to improve and help our students." "It's always a worry because when people look at your school, they always look at your test scores and you want the perception of your school to be a positive one," said Kay Staebler, a fifth-grade teacher at Norton Elementary, one of Jefferson County's highest-performing schools. "I think it's going to be hard for parents to understand, especially if they are used to their child being distinguished or proficient to suddenly see an apprentice."

### **CATS vs. Unbridled Learning testing**

The previous testing system — the Commonwealth Accountability Testing

System, or CATS — had an objective of simply getting students to academic proficiency. It was replaced with Unbridled Learning, a testing system that focuses on students' college and career readiness and ensuring their success after high school.

"We want our kids competitive in a global economic market," Holliday said. "As early as third grade, you will know if your child is on a trajectory to graduate high school, ready for college and career." The new testing system is a key component of Senate Bill 1, enacted in 2009 by the Kentucky General Assembly, which mandated a new public school assessment and accountability program beginning with the 2011-12 school year. The law also called for more rigorous academic standards, aimed at having students develop a deeper understanding of concepts, not just regurgitate facts or formulas. Kentucky schools responded by adopting Common Core Standards in reading and math, which are designed to be more rigorous and better aligned with college coursework and 21st-century workplace skills. Kentucky was the first to adopt those standards; since then, 46 other states have followed suit. The new standards were first taught last school year, and Kentucky was the first to test them last spring. "Last year was very challenging," Staebler said. "There were a lot of gaps and, in some cases, we had to go back and teach them things that according to the new standards, they should have already learned."

But Staebler said she and her colleagues are hopeful.

"I know the scores will get better once the teachers have time to reflect on what worked and make the appropriate changes," she said. "Last year was a transition year and transitions are always difficult."

Bob Rodosky, director of testing and accountability for JCPS, has called the new accountability system "very ambitious."

"The stakes are much higher," Rodosky said. "People are expecting much more. And because we were among the first to implement the higher standards, everyone will be watching us."

### **Replacing No Child Left Behind**

The new tests will also be used to judge schools' performance on reading and math standards that are mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind law. The law has come under increasing fire for holding schools to what some contend are unrealistic expectations. And the Obama administration has called on Congress to overhaul it.

Kentucky is one of 34 states that have been granted a waiver from No Child Left Behind, allowing it to use its own system to determine whether its schools are making sufficient progress.

Gone is the term "adequate yearly progress," which federal officials used to determine how schools performed on standardized tests. Those that failed to meet their testing goals were sanctioned and required to submit school improvement plans.

Lisa Gross, a spokeswoman for the Kentucky Department of Education, said schools now will have to meet annual measurable objectives set by the state. "But this is the first year for that, so that is not something that will be measured or required this year," she said.

That also means that no schools will be named persistently low-achieving this year, Gross said.

The type of test students took depends on their grade level.

Students in grades three through eight took the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) test.

**MORE**

The test featured questions that allow comparisons between a student's performance and other students and questions that determine whether a student has learned a particular set of skills.

In the past, the state test consisted solely of the latter, offering no comparison with other students.

At the high school level, students took end-of-course assessments in algebra II, English II, biology and U.S. history. They also took an on-demand writing test in which they were presented with a question or scenario, and then asked to write about it.

Previously, high school students' performance on the state test did not count toward their grade. However, with the end-of-course assessments, the results count for at least 20 percent of their final grade.

Individual students will still be rated as novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished. But a separate score will determine a student's performance level,

Holliday said. Ken Stites, principal at Norton Elementary, said he also hopes parents and the community will be patient when the scores are released.

"Just because the scores are lower, doesn't mean we are moving backwards," he said. "It just means the measurement is more difficult; that the bar went up and the test was harder. Things will be much better next year and the year after, because we will have been teaching the new standards

longer and the kids will be exposed to the content longer."

Patrick Levier, a Norton parent, said he isn't worried.

"I know the teachers are doing a great job of preparing the students," he said. "We are curious to see how Norton stacks up compared to other schools, but it won't deter us from sending our kids here."

Reach reporter Antoinette Konz at 582-4232 [or@tkonz](https://twitter.com/atkonz) on Twitter.

#### HOW SCHOOLS WILL BE JUDGED:

Unbridled Learning has five main components — achievement, gap, growth, college/career readiness and graduation rate.

» **Achievement** — How students perform on state tests.

» **Gap** — How students who traditionally underperform compare with their peers are progressing.

» **Growth** — How all students are making progress.

» **College/Career Readiness** — How well schools and districts are preparing students for life after high school.

» **Graduation Rate** — How many students are graduating on time.

Points from each of these areas will be weighted and added together for an overall score and then ranked and placed into percentiles. Overall district scores will be ranked in order, while

schools will be ranked in order by level — elementary, middle and high.

Schools and districts will be classified as distinguished, proficient or needs improvement.

» **Distinguished** — The top 10 percent of districts or schools from each level.

» **Proficient** — The top 30 percent of districts or schools from each level.

» **Needs Improvement** — Schools/districts falling outside the proficient or distinguished categories.

Several other labels will be applied to schools: » **Schools of Distinction** — The highest-performing elementary, middle and high schools or districts with overall scores at the 95th percentile or higher.

» **High-performing schools** — Elementary, middle and high schools or districts with overall scores at the 90th percentile or higher.

» **High-progress schools** — Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools showing the highest progress, as compared with their peers, and districts showing the highest progress, as compared to their peers.

» **Priority schools** — Schools identified as persistently low achieving.

» **Focus schools** — Schools with low achievement gap scores; high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent for two consecutive years and schools with low scores among student gap groups.

# New test scores are expected to cause confusion

Statewide results scheduled for release Nov. 2

By **CHUCK MASON**

*The Daily News*

[cmason@bgdailynews.com](mailto:cmason@bgdailynews.com)/783-3262

Long-awaited test scores will be available Nov. 2, and a spokesman for the Kentucky Department of Education says the scores should be viewed in light of what they are — a one-year snapshot under a totally new testing system.

The results are from tests the students took last spring. Parents are expected to receive scores for their children a couple of weeks after the public release, said Lisa Y. Gross, director of the Division of Communications for the Kentucky Department of Education.

Individual child scores are protected under privacy law, Gross said.

The scores, whether individual, school or district, take student achievement tracking into a new realm in Kentucky.

"We're asking more of students. These standards are tougher," Gross said.

Local school districts have already received data that they are allowed to look over and can ask for changes if they suspect any errors. That information is embargoed to the general public until shortly after midnight Nov. 2.

Gross said the test scores will be a departure from the previous 20 years of consistent data. The state adopted common core education standards used by several other states, and the new tests are a result of that new standard. In

particular, reading and mathematics standards are more rigorous, Gross said.

They are part of what the state calls "Unbridled Learning." Kentucky implemented the new system beginning in the 2011-12 school year. Each school and district will receive an overall score on a scale of one to 100, something new that allows schools within a district to be compared and districts to be compared with other districts.

"People are going to be scratching their heads over the data," Gross said, noting the Kentucky Education Department has done several things to prepare parents and educators for the new numbers. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence has sponsored several area public meetings to discuss the new tests and the new scores format.

"People are naturally going to look at the previous data," she said. "There will be a lot of confusion."

The new testing model holds the individual public schools and districts accountable for achievement, gaps in academic performance, achievement growth, college and career readiness and graduation rates, Gross said.

The schools and districts will be ranked as distinguished (top 10 percent), proficient (top 30 percent) and needs improvement (at or below the 69th percentile), she said.

# Test scores coming on Nov. 2

6:07 PM, Oct 24, 2012 |

Cincinnati Enquirer

Written by

William Croyle

Test scores from the state's new accountability and assessment system will be released to the public on Nov. 2 by the Kentucky Department of Education.

It will be the first release of data under the new "Kentucky's Unbridled Learning" model. It is the biggest overhaul of the state's K-12 education system since 1990, when the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) was implemented.

In 2010, Kentucky was the first of 45 states to adopt the Common Core Standards for reading and math. The standards provide consistent national benchmarks and are focused on all students being ready for college and a career. Similar standards are being developed in social studies and science.

Testing data on Nov. 2 will come from assessments administered last spring.

An overall score, between 1 and 100, will be given to each school and district based on points earned in five components: achievement, gap, growth, college/career readiness and graduation rate.

Each of those components will count for a certain percentage of the overall score. Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness will not be factored into the elementary school scores. Graduation Rate will also not be in middle school scores.

Overall scores will be ranked by level – elementary, middle and high school – from best to worst and placed into percentiles. Each school's and district's percentile ranking will determine its classification of Distinguished (the top 10 percent), Proficient (the top 30 percent) or Needs Improvement (those not in the first two categories).

The new data cannot be compared to CATS scores in previous years because of the different factors that determine the new data.

Kentucky New Era, Hopkinsville, Ky. Oct. 26, 2012

# School district readies for K-PREP test results

BY DENNIS O'NEIL  
NEW ERA STAFF WRITER

Christian County students could see lower scores on their state assessment this year, Superintendent Mary Ann Gemmill told the Christian County Board of Education on Thursday.

The state plans to release results from the Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress, or K-PREP, test in early November. This is the first year the test has been given, replacing the Kentucky Core Content Test.

The test is part of a new statewide accountability model called Unbridled Learning, which was developed after Kentucky received a waiver on the

federal No Child Left Behind program earlier this year.

The K-PREP test was administered at the end of this past school year. Gemmill said the standards for K-PREP are much tougher and thinks students may have difficulty tran-

sitioning between the two tests.

"(It's) probably going to result in a lower category or ranking than we are accustomed to, but that doesn't mean the kids aren't working hard and the teachers aren't working hard," said Gemmill.

Since this is the test's first year, there will be no previous data the district can use to assess its progress. Gemmill said they plan to take the results as baseline data and use it to plan for the next assessment.

Gemmill said the school district has been working to inform the public about the new test and make sure parents understand the results. The district plans on sending home information about the test with students so parents can know what to expect.

"I want our community to understand," Gemmill said. "More than anything, I don't want our students to feel badly. I want us to take the information we get

SEE K-PREP, PAGE A7

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and direct our focus on what we need to do to help students meet their future successes."

The board also heard a report on the district's 2011-12 audit from Brian Woosley, an accountant with Stites-Carter and Associates. The district's net assets have increased by \$2.7 million

over the past year and it finished the school year with a cash balance of \$17.1 million.

The district did see its general fund balance decrease by \$1.9 million. Woosley doesn't see this as catastrophic since the district had an extra \$1.3 million in the fund from the year before.

"Obviously you can't go down \$1.9 million too

many years," Woosley told the board. "You are in a solid financial position. I think your reserves are at a good level."

In other business:

■ The board authorized the purchase of six school buses for \$566,948.

REACH DENNIS O'NEIL at 270-887-3240 or [dneil@kentuckynewera.com](mailto:dneil@kentuckynewera.com).

# New Standards, New Tests and New Scores

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**Danielle Crafton**

**SurfKY News -- Henderson**

Oct 26 | 14:01 PM

HENDERSON, KY (10/26/12) - The results of the new Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) tests will be released on November 2nd. The state test has changed. The new K-PREP tests are more rigorous and replace the Kentucky Core Content Tests which were given under the old CATS system. Students now experience more challenging curriculum, instruction and tests.

Senate Bill 1, passed in 2009, required new standards for core subjects so that Kentucky students could be competitive in a global economy. Standards are the basis for content that is taught in reading and math. Two years later, Kentucky became the first of 46 states to adopt the Common Core State Standards in math and English/Language Arts. Standards for both science and social studies are being developed. The Common Core Standards provide a consistent national benchmark that assures students will be college and career ready. These became the Kentucky Core Academic Standards which were incorporated into the state's classrooms in the 2011-2012 school year. Kentucky is the first state to also test these new national standards as part of its state accountability system. So, all eyes are on Kentucky as it leads the way once again in educational reform.

With college and career readiness as the main focal point for public schools in Kentucky, the new standards will help principals and teachers prepare students for a changing world and connect education with the economy and employment. It is not possible to compare the new scores with previous test scores since students are being assessed using different measures. The previous measure was that of basic proficiency in math and reading. The new measure is college and career readiness. The scores students receive on the state tests and their performance classifications (novice, apprentice, proficient, distinguished) are likely to appear lower than in the past. The intent of the new standards is to better prepare our students for college and the 21st century workplace. It is projected that over 60% of future jobs will require some training beyond high school.

"We will do whatever it takes to make sure our students are college and career ready after high school. Our students need to be competitive globally, and with these new test standards, this will raise the bar to challenge and prepare them for the real world," noted Henderson County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Thomas L. Richey.

In grades 3-8, the new tests are a blended model of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced questions. The norm-referenced portion consists of multiple choice questions with results that use percentiles to compare our students to others in the state and nation. The criterion-referenced portion includes multiple choice, short answer and extended response questions written specifically for Kentucky's new Core Academic Standards. The results give students a score considered novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished in the subject area. The new test has a strict time limit which is approximately 40% less than time allotted in years past.

In grades 9-12 students take an end of course, final exam in English 2, Algebra 2, U.S. History, and Biology. These end of course exams count both as 20% of their final grade for the course and toward the high school's state accountability score. These exams include two multiple choice sections of 45 minutes and a written portion, called constructed response, of 45 minutes.

All of the students' scores feed into the larger school score. In the past, schools and districts received an overall score on a scale 0 to 140. Under the new assessment and accountability system, schools and districts will receive an overall score on a scale 0 to 100. New school scores will be sequenced from high to low by elementary, middle or high school level, and then divided into equal sections called percentiles.

The formula for those measurements includes the following elements:

- Achievement- student achievement on reading, math, science, social studies and writing tests
- Gap- how achievement varies among different groups (minority, special education, low-income) of students
- Growth- how much student performance improves in reading and math from one year to the next

**MORE**



- College/Career Readiness- number of students who hit the targets to achieve the required level of preparation for life after high school
- Graduation Rate- number of students completing high school on time

Elementary school scores are derived from Achievement (30%), Gap (30%) and Growth (40%).

Middle school scores are derived from Achievement (28%), Gap (28%), Growth (28%) and College and Career Readiness (16%).

High school scores are derived from Achievement (20%), Gap (20%), Growth (20%), College and Career Readiness (20%) and Graduation Rate (20%).

Schools and districts at or above the 90th percentile will be labeled Distinguished. Those in the 70th to 89th percentile will be labeled Proficient. Those below the 69th percentile will be labeled Needs Improvement.

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has warned districts that scores will be lower as a result of the new standards, higher rigor and the fact that the scale tops at 100, not 140. KDE has projected proficiency in reading to drop 36% in elementary schools, 30% in middle schools and 25% in high schools. Additionally, math proficiency is expected to drop 37% in elementary, 29% in middle schools and 10% in high schools.

Commissioner Terry Holliday adds, "The results of the Kentucky assessments are more closely aligned to results from the **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**. Those results report proficiency at a much higher level than most state tests. Being proficient on NAEP is similar to our new college and career ready proficiency."

Stu Silberman, Executive Director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, notes, "With the new standards, we've increased rigor, and we are teaching different subjects at earlier times to be more internationally benchmarked."

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence also cautioned that Kentucky schools are not failing. Stu Silberman adds, "Instead, student scores are lower precisely because we are expecting more of our students, not less. We are sure students can rise to our expectations, but they need some time to do so."

Parents/guardians will receive an individual report on their child, and results for schools and districts will be made available at the Kentucky Department of Education website: [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) on November 2, 2012.

For more information contact Jinger Carter, Director of Accountability and Assessment for Henderson County Schools at 270.831.5000.

# NEW K-PREP TEST SCORES COULD COME AS A SHOCK

## EDUCATION OFFICIALS GET EARLY START REASSURING PARENTS

By Jim Warren [jwarren@herald-leader.com](mailto:jwarren@herald-leader.com)  
Herald-Leader 10/27/12

State education officials say many Kentucky parents could be alarmed next week when the new K-PREP student test scores are released.

The K-PREP test, which students took for the first time last spring, offers several new features. State officials expect to release the results next Friday.

The scoring system will rank schools statewide for the first time, as well as emphasizing college and career readiness. The test also is tied to new core content standards in math and English, and it's internationally benchmarked to what is being taught in other high-scoring countries.

Educators previously warned parents and community leaders that scores might appear lower — initially, at least — when the new system kicked in. Now the time has come.

Under the new system, Kentucky school districts scoring at or above the 70th percentile will be rated as "Distinguished" or "Proficient," the highest rating. Districts and schools scoring below that level will be in the "Needs Improvement" category.

Scores also will look different this year because they are based on a scale of 0 to 100, rather than 0 to 140 as in previous years. If that isn't enough to confuse people, the new test is so different that education officials say you won't be able to compare this year's student performance with performance in previous years. State Education Commissioner Terry Holliday and other educators say Kentucky parents shouldn't panic if they see students who scored at the distinguished level in the past falling to apprentice or even novice level in the first year of the new test.

"It's a new bar; it's a new standard; it's more rigorous," Holliday said. "Parents should not be nervous about this. They should work with their teachers and schools and say, 'What do we have to do to help our kids reach these more rigorous standards?' It's going to take a couple of years, but they shouldn't panic."

In the past, the state education officials discouraged people from trying to compare schools based on scores from state tests. This year, however, the testing results will include school-by-school comparisons.

Holliday said officials decided to take that step because he likes the idea, and because various outside groups had persisted in making such comparisons despite the department's objections.

"So, we said that if everybody was going to do it anyway, we'd prefer to kind of give it the state seal of approval," Holliday said. "We also know that parents want to be able to compare their schools against similar schools. And I think comparative data could be a great incentive for education improvement in Kentucky."

The test results will rank Kentucky's elementary, middle and high schools from top to bottom, on a percentile basis.

Schools scoring at or above the 70th percentile (that is, schools that outperform 70 percent of all schools taking the test) will be classified as either Distinguished (the top 10 percent) or Proficient (the top 30 percent).

Setting the cutoff at the 70th percentile automatically means that schools in the 69th percentile or below will end up in the Needs Improvement category.

Holliday said officials picked the 70th percentile because it is close to standards of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which Kentucky does not have to follow this year.

"If we'd stuck with No Child Left Behind, we would have had 85 or 90 percent of our schools not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress," he said. "For this new model, we had to set a standard that was similar. So we set the Needs Improvement bar at 70th percentile."

"We'll still have a significant number of schools labeled Needs Improvement. But we will give them a target to get out of Needs Improvement that is much more attainable than the old No Child Left Behind targets."

Holliday called the 70th percentile a "good place to start."

But Thomas Guskey, a University of Kentucky testing expert and member of the Kentucky School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council, says the cutoff is random and will confuse parents.

The new system "is counter to the whole philosophy and orientation of the state testing system," Guskey said. "It doesn't tell you if you've learned anything. It could be that a majority of schools are doing really well. But 69 percent will still fall into the Needs Improvement category."

Carmen Coleman, superintendent of the Danville Independent Schools, said she was a big supporter of Kentucky's accountability system. In the old system, schools were judged by their progress, based on constant improvement by students.

MORE

"I am all for the highest standards, I believe we owe our kids nothing less," she said. "But this system is extremely confusing. We've gone from a system that allowed as many to achieve as possible. This system won't allow that. I believe this is going to be devastating for some schools and districts."

Even though there will be challenges, state educators say the new test and standards are essential in preparing Kentucky students for a more competitive world.

The K-PREP test replaces the old Kentucky Core Content Test which had been used for several years. The state hired NC Pearson Inc., a Minnesota firm, to develop the new test at an initial cost of about \$7.6 million, education department spokeswoman Lisa Gross said. Pearson's total contract will run to about \$58 million over the next six years, according to Gross.

Meanwhile, with new test scores coming out in a few days, various groups, including the Fayette County Public Schools, are trying to spread the word and tell parents and community leaders what to expect.

Fayette County is launching a public information drive to help people understand the test results. Letters will be sent home in the next few days and the district has launched [Morethanascor.net](http://Morethanascor.net), an informative Web site, and an e-mail address, [morethana\\_score@fayette.kyschools.us](mailto:morethana_score@fayette.kyschools.us), where the public can submit questions.

In addition to that outreach, Superintendent Tom Shelton has been making appearances before Commerce Lexington and various civic and community groups to explain the new test scores.

"The explanation is difficult because it's a complex subject," Shelton said. "But we can't sit back and wait; we have to get the information out there."

Other groups, such as the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, also have been putting out the word. Wilson Sears, executive director of the superintendents' association, said he hopes such efforts will reassure parents and ease the shock if test scores are sharply lower.

"Superintendents are supportive of the new test standards," Sears said. "We have tried to deliver the message across the state that ... while the standards are higher than they've ever been, the assessment system has changed."

"It's going to look different, and you won't be able to judge the test scores this year based on what you've seen in the past."

Challenges aside, Shelton says Kentucky's students ultimately will benefit from the more demanding standards.

"If we look at the global society of today's world, our children in Fayette County and Kentucky are not competing against the kids in the next county or the next district," he said. "They are competing against kids from all over the world."

"If we want to make sure our kids are adequately prepared, we have to have these rigorous standards."

Jim Warren (859) 231-3255.  
Twitter: @heraldleader

## How K-Prep is different

Results from the new K-Prep test, which students took for the first time last spring, are to be released Nov. 2. Here are some of the main features of Kentucky's new state student testing system:

- | Schools ranked statewide for the first time.
- | Emphasis on measuring college and career readiness.
- | Gap scores measure progress of underperforming student groups.
- | Graduation rates gauge how many students are graduating on time.
- | No Child Left Behind not included.
- | New designations for the highest performing schools.

# Support tougher academic standards

## EVERY CHILD DESERVES CHANCE TO SUCCEED

By James R. Allen

Herald-Leader 10/28/12

Kentuckians will soon be seeing the first results from the state tests on our new, more challenging academic standards.

Educators across the commonwealth are in their second school year of helping students master the standards as they focus on preparing every student to succeed in college, career training or the workplace.

State education officials and advocates have been talking for months about the possibility that the test scores will be lower – or appear to be lower – than what we have seen in the past. Several factors could contribute to lower scores: more challenging work, transitioning to a new test, different ways of scoring, and others.

Even if the predictions are true, and scores do go down this year, it is critical that all Kentuckians – parents, teachers, employers, policy leaders and elected officials – continue to support the tougher learning standards, and the students, educators and schools that are helping build a stronger future for our state.

These standards are designed to prepare students for college, career training and good-paying jobs – the ones that require

high-level skills, critical thinking, working cooperatively and creative problem solving. Internationally benchmarked, they will improve Kentuckians' prospects for success as global competition continues to become more a part of our everyday lives. And they will give today's students a stronger start on a successful life.

As employers representing all parts of Kentucky, we know how important it is for every student to receive the highest-quality education. We also know that the business community has an important role to play in supporting our schools, teachers and students. That's why we have come together to speak with a strong employer voice on behalf of educational excellence. As with anything meaningful, significant progress won't happen overnight. But we are confident that it will happen if Kentucky holds firm to its commitment, as reflected in the challenging academic standards, to prepare all of our students for success in college, career and life.

*James R. Allen of Louisville is CEO of Hilliard Lyons and chair of The Business Leader Champions for Education, a joint initiative of the Kentucky Chamber Foundation and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.*

## Lafayette wins 5A marching band title

By Jim Warren [jwarren@herald-leader.com](mailto:jwarren@herald-leader.com)

Herald-Leader 10/29/12

**BOWLING GREEN** — Lafayette High School is the 2012 Kentucky Class 5A state marching band champion.

Lafayette topped North Har-din in Saturday night's 5A finals of the Kentucky Music Educators Association Kentucky State Marching Band Championships at Western Kentucky University's Houchens-L.T. Smith Stadium, with Madison Central taking third and Paul Laurence Dunbar finishing fourth. Dunbar was denied a third straight state title. It won in 2010 and 2011.

Dunbar and Lafayette are perennial 5A state championship contenders. Dunbar has won seven state titles. Saturday's was Lafayette's 17th state championship. "We had great leadership this year; great students, great parents; a great staff," Lafayette band director Chuck Smith said after the results were announced late Saturday. "We have a great organization at Lafayette, and I'm proud to be part of it."

Beechwood won Class A, followed by Hazard, Murray and Williamstown. Class 2A went to Glasgow, followed by Danville, LaRue County and Hart County. Bourbon County won Class 3A, trailed by Adair County, Garrard County and Boyle County. Madisonville-North Hopkins won Class 4A, followed by Grant County, Anderson County and John Hardin.

Jim Warren: (859) 231-3255.

## **Scores set for release**

### **Officials say parents will be unfamiliar items on new accountability test reports**

Mike James

ASHLAND — The Kentucky Department of Education will release accountability test scores on Friday, and parents can expect to see some unfamiliar things.

Among them most likely will be lower scores than they are accustomed to seeing. Also, the state is using a different way to measure whether a school is making adequate yearly progress, and the scores will rank schools, which will give a parent an idea how his or her child's school stacks up against other schools in getting students ready for college and careers.

The release is the first in the Unbridled Learning accountability system, which seeks to measure progress toward the state's new goal of making sure students are on track to succeed in college or career training.

It measures five areas. They include how well students perform on tests in several subjects; the size of the academic gaps among students who are disabled, not native English speakers, low income and ethnic minorities; growth in achievement in math and reading; college and career readiness; and graduation rates.

The scores are likely to be lower because they are measured differently, on a scale of 1 to 100 instead of to 140, and the tests are tougher. The tests are based on the new Common Core Standards, which Kentucky has adopted and which are on their way to being embraced by almost all 50 states. The standards in some cases expect students to

know things one or more years earlier than before.

Students are tested in reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing, and schools and districts receive points based on student scores. Students get scores that place them in the familiar areas of novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished, and the school and district are scored based on the average of the students.

The gap is calculated by comparing the scores of students in the typically low-achieving areas such as low income and disability with those of the school as a whole. It differs from the old system in that if any one of the demographic groups failed to meet proficiency, the entire school was deemed to not make adequate progress.

The growth category compares students with their academic peers across the state, comparing the percentage of students showing growth based on reading and math tests at the middle school level and the ACT and pre-ACT tests in high school.

College and career readiness is based on pre-ACT tests in middle school and English, reading and math benchmarks in high school. High school students who don't meet the benchmarks take other tests.

Graduation rates are calculated under a new system and are based on what is called the cohort rate. It includes students from the original ninth-grade cohort, adds students

who transfer in and subtracts the ones who transfer out. That way, the rate is more accurate for districts with highly transient populations.

In a way, the process of measuring school improvement has started all over again.

"Parents need to recognize that this is a start and that there's no way to compare," said Richard Oppenheimer, curriculum coordinator for the Ashland Independent

School District. As a starting point it helps districts with charting a path to improvement, he said.

The data to be released Friday pertains to schools and districts. Parents will receive individual student reports later.

MIKE JAMES can be reached at [mjames@dailyindependent.com](mailto:mjames@dailyindependent.com) or (606) 326-2652.

# Continue to support tougher learning standards

Courier-Journal 10/31/12

Kentuckians will soon be seeing the first results from the state tests on our new, more challenging academic standards. Educators across the commonwealth are in their second school year of helping students master the standards as they focus on preparing every student to succeed in college, career training or the workplace.

State education officials and advocates have been talking for months about the possibility that the test scores will be lower — or appear to be lower — than what we have seen in the past. Several factors could contribute to lower scores: more challenging work, transitioning to a new test, different ways of scoring and others.

Even if the predictions are true, and scores do go down this year, it is critical that all Kentuckians — parents, teachers, employers, policy leaders and elected officials — continue to support the tougher learning standards and the students, educators and schools that are helping build a stronger future for our state.

These standards are designed to prepare students for college, career training and good-paying jobs — the ones that require high-level skills, critical thinking, working cooperatively and creative problem-solving. Internationally benchmarked, they will improve Kentuckians' prospects for success as global competition continues to become more a part of our everyday lives. And they will give today's students a stronger start on a successful life. As employers representing all parts of Kentucky, we know how important it is for every student to receive the highest-quality education. We also know that the business community has an important role to play in supporting our schools, teachers and students. That's why we have come together to speak with a strong employer voice on behalf of educational excellence. As with anything meaningful, significant progress won't happen overnight. But we are confident that it will happen if Kentucky holds firm to its commitment, as reflected in the challenging academic standards, to prepare all of our students for success in college, career and life.

**JAMES R. ALLEN** Chairman

The Business Leader Champions for Education Louisville 40202

*The Business Leader Champions for Education is a joint initiative of the Kentucky Chamber Foundation and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. The group is made up of corporate executives and other business leaders from across the commonwealth.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### School board races

The voters in three of the Jefferson County School Board districts have the opportunity to change the course of history. Their votes can be the beginning when education for all children in Louisville becomes the primary objective of the Jefferson County Public Schools.

This school board election is not a race issue. The political spin of "keeping the goals of diversity" and the fear mongering threats of "resegregation" blinds the good citizens of this city from the real issue of this school board campaign.

The facts are, and have always been, that the majority of African-American children are bused farther away and to worse schools than any other ethnic group. Black students face almost daily JCPS bus accidents, many with injuries. The schools that these children are bused to are so far away that their parents cannot attend parent-teacher

conferences, much less rush to their children aid during a crisis, injury or when their children become sick at school.

Property taxes increase every year to pay for the escalating gasoline costs. Teachers pay suffer while the JCPS's billion-dollar budget gets shuffled to spending more on busing than on student education improvement. Now is the time to stand up for our children. Let's vote in people onto the school board who will take that JCPS line item budget of \$100 million dollars spent every year on busing and let's start improving education for all children.

Please join me in voting for Chuck Haddaway in District 7, Phil Haming in District 2, and Chris Fell in District 4.

**TEDDY B. GORDON**  
Louisville 40202

# The Sentinel-News Where are test results?

Shelbyville

Oct. 31, 2012

## Citizens deserve to see the embargoed state standardized test results before they vote Tuesday on school board candidates.

In his My Word article Neihof ("Believe in students; believe in schools," Oct. 17), Shelby County Public Schools Superintendent James Neihof describes what many state and county school officials are feeling: excited and jittery about the soon-to-be-released Kentucky public school testing results.

### My Word Paul Waller

While Mr. Neihof may have seen those test scores, you cannot. Why? Because the Kentucky Department of Education has embargoed those results from being made public until at least this week. Actually, the

KDE has not guaranteed the release of those scores before the General Election on Tuesday.

As a result, citizens across Kentucky may find themselves going to the polls and judging the work of incumbent school board members without having access to the important data revealed by the most recent state test scores.

Until the release of the new scores, many public school superintendents are doing exactly what Superintendent Neihof did in his piece: preparing the public for a severe drop in student ratings in core educational content areas. Yes, major damage control is taking place around the state, led by Kentucky's Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday.

A review of papers in county after county reveals articles similar to Neihof's. When the embargoed results finally are released, the public most likely still will be shocked by how few Kentucky public school students score proficient in mathematics and reading. Many parents and teachers in Kentucky expect the embargoed results to prove that prior KIRIS and KCCT scores were inflated.

At various times in the past, Kentuckians were asked to believe that the KIRIS and then the KCCT assessment systems accurately captured the scholastic achievement of our students and the effectiveness of our schools. Now, according to the Sentinel-News, Mr. Neihof, "as well as educational leaders in Frankfort and across the state," are asking us, in essence, to forget what those tests revealed about our students' achievement because there is "no way to compare" KIRIS and KCCT scores with the embargoed results.

According to Mr. Neihof, "We are establishing a new reality - one that gives us an accurate representation of how our students stack up against

peers worldwide." Well, with all due respect, we've heard that before.

Superintendents can write about the embargoed test scores, having full knowledge of what they reveal, but no citizen can respond from that same knowledge base. Everyone outside official school administrators is being kept in the dark until too close to the upcoming elections to have much effect. While Mr. Neihof mentions the current school board members favorably in his October 17th article, the citizens of Shelby County cannot learn what the embargoed test scores reveal about the effectiveness of the current board's policies and spending until, at best, right before the election.

Even though the KDE has thus far chosen to keep citizens in the dark about the most recent test results, Shelby County taxpayers have enough information to know that we are not getting what we pay for and that our students are not getting the education they deserve.

A letter from school board incumbent Sam Hinkle ("Core subjects: Finances vs. performance," Oct. 12) asserts that the current board "has been very fiscally responsible."

In his My Word ("Schools are on correct track," Oct. 24), Leon Mooneyhan writes, "The current rate of taxation is in the middle 50 percent of all 174 Kentucky school districts." That allegation is disproven, however, by data compiled by the Kentucky Revenue Cabinet in a document entitled "2011 Property Tax Rate Book."

According to that data, before the recent increase, Shelby County Public Schools had the second-highest school tax rate on real property of the 120 county public school districts and the 29th highest rate of the 174 independent and county public school districts.

Until the Shelby County public schools' average ACT composite score rises to or above the national average, however, our school administrators and board members cannot claim, with any credibility, that our students are receiving the best education possible and that our hard-earned tax dollars have been most effectively spent.

Despite a high rate of taxation, the 2012 average ACT composite score for the Shelby County district is below the national average. Moreover, the Shelby County district ranks 69th among Kentucky's independent and county public school districts in average ACT composite scoring.

Like Mr. Neihof, I believe students respond to challenges and most often meet big goals their schools set for them. For this reason, I applaud the school system's target of having "every student graduating ready for college or career in 2016." Shelby County's schools are full of excellent teachers and smart students, but to reach this laudable objective, our county must have effective leadership on the school board.

While the KDE should allow voters to know about the embargoed test scores before election day, we already have enough data to recognize that our current school board has failed to set fiscal and academic policies to attain excellence. The current school board's policies have produced an average ACT composite score that ranks poorly among other districts in a state that ranks only three from the bottom in the nation.

Shelby County's bright students, dedicated parents, talented teachers and hard-working taxpayers deserve better.